

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
MINUTES**

**Date: Thursday, 20 January 2022**

**Time: 10.00am**

**Place: Virtual (via Zoom)**

**Present:** Adrian Hawkins (Independent Chair)  
Matt Partridge (Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Council)  
Councillor Sharon Taylor (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Councillor John Gardner (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Chris Barnes (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Lucy King (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Annie Piper (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Gemma Hannant (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Ishbel Brierley (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Clare Fletcher (Stevenage Borough Council)  
County Councillor Richard Roberts (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Colin Haigh (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP)  
Briege Leahy (Herts Chamber of Commerce)  
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)  
Charlotte Blizzard-Welch (Stevenage Citizens Advice Bureau)  
Ed Jordan (WENTA)  
Claire Dicks (MBDA)  
Kasia Averall (Catapult)  
Kit Davies (North Hertfordshire College)  
Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)  
Sian Carter (Homes England)  
Karen Hillen (BEIS)  
Kevin Cowin (Mace)  
James Latham (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)  
Jennifer Godwin (East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust)  
Julie Newlan (University of Hertfordshire)  
Will Rohleder (Reef Group)  
Richard Whitehead (Aecom)

**Start / End** Start Time: 10.00am  
**Time:** End Time: 11.30am

**1 WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING COMMENTS**

The Board Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished them a happy and

prosperous new year. He looked forward to the meeting considering the next two Town Deal Business Cases, namely in respect of the New Town Heritage Centre and Stevenage Sport & Leisure Hub.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Board was advised that apologies for absence had been submitted by the following:

Stephen Ward (Catapult) – Kasia Averall substituting  
Greg Westover (Legal & General)  
Sarah Brierley (Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust)  
Hetty Thornton (Historic England)  
Duncan Parsley (GlaxoSmithKline)  
Keith Ellis and Karen Burness (Airbus)  
Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership)  
Charles Amies (Home England) – Sian Carter substituting

## **3 MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 2 DECEMBER 2021**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 2 December 2021 be approved as a correct record, subject to an amendment to Minute 5: Town Deal Business Cases Tranche 2 (1): Enterprise Centre Project, first bullet point in the fifth paragraph, replacement of the sentence “All other cities in the Top 12 were in the USA” with “No other European cities were in the Top 12”.

## **4 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENNESS**

The Board received the latest conflicts of interest list.

It was noted that Colin Haigh (HCC Assistant Director, Growth & Place, Environment & Infrastructure Team) declared a conflict of interest in that he and his Team were responsible for co-ordinating comments on planning applications relating to Stevenage Town Deal projects.

## **5 TOWN DEAL BUSINESS CASES TRANCHE 3**

Chris Barnes (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) presented the Tranche 3 Town Deal Summary Business Cases for the New Towns Heritage Centre and Stevenage Sports and Leisure Hub.

### **(1) New Towns Heritage Centre Project**

Chris advised that this project comprised the delivery of a Heritage Centre/Museum and cultural hub within the proposed Public Sector hub, offering a 21<sup>st</sup> Century cultural experience that reached more people. The scheme would be part funded by £2M from the Towns Fund and required a further £3M of match funding from SBC and other partners. The lead organisation would be SBC, who owned much of the site, together with a few third-party interests. Outline planning permission for the Public Sector hub had been granted.

Chris commented that the proposed scheme was fully consistent with the aims and objectives of the Stevenage Town Investment Plan (TIP), although the “national” cultural offer of the New Towns Heritage Centre was more challenging and would require the co-production and funding from external partners.

Chris explained that the Centre would be a new asset that incorporated celebration of New Towns and the Stevenage Museum as part of a cultural hub. It would contain high quality, technology driven displays, with maximum accessibility, and would be integrated with a café, library, and ground floor community spaces to deliver flexible/multi-use spaces. An operating model and high-level business plan would be developed, and there would be a strong economic analysis to demonstrate the value for money of the investment.

Chris referred to conditions from the Town Deal Heads of Terms, which required the provision of further analysis of costings, including more information about costs for each element of the project; the provision of more evidence on the long-term financial sustainability of the project, including how running costs would be covered; and the provision of further detail of the impact of the project through the inclusion of a broader range of outcomes and outputs. There was a need to demonstrate how these conditions had been satisfied for the stage the project had reached, and how they would be managed over time.

In respect of engagement, Chris advised that the SBC Community Select Committee had visited cultural facilities in Milton Keynes and Colchester and had discussed the New Towns Heritage Centre at various meetings, which had resulted in recommendations which had had been incorporated into the project. In addition, Stakeholder workshop sessions had been held with a range of local people, and a summary report had been produced which provided some robust evidence for the Business Case.

Chris recommended that the Business Case be endorsed.

The Board debated the Business Case, and the following points were made:

- it was confirmed that the building should be flexible enough to accommodate those undertaking academic research.
- a focus should be on ensuring that the Heritage Centre was accessible for use by all socio-economic groups.
- the timing of when the Heritage Centre would become operational in relation to the opening of the larger Public Sector hub would be flagged up as a specific risk for the project.
- a proactive strategy would need to be developed to engage with the community and education sectors to maximise use of the Heritage Centre. Teachers were represented on the initial Stakeholder Group, but it was noted that there would need for a broader consultation exercise (including the education sector) going forward.
- there needed to be a continuation and expansion of the cultural outreach work currently conducted by the Stevenage Museum.
- there was a projected 50% increase in visitor numbers at the Heritage Centre compared to the existing Museum. Chris agreed to supply the Board with more detailed information regarding these projected figures.

- it was felt vital that there was an individual postholder based at the Centre with responsibility for marketing and community/academic engagement, including with North Herts College and the University of Hertfordshire; and
- consideration should be given at the next stage of engagement to include professional bodies, such as the Royal Town Planning Institute.

It was **RESOLVED** that the New Towns Heritage Centre Project Business Case be endorsed and recommended to the Accountable Body (Stevenage Borough Council) for approval and noting that the scheme would be delivered as a project within the wider Public Sector Hub programme and following the development of funding bids with external partners.

## (2) Stevenage Sports and Leisure Hub Project

Chris advised that this project comprised the delivery of a new multi-use Sports and Leisure hub, Heritage Centre/Museum and cultural hub within the proposed Public Sector hub, including youth service provision, to deliver high quality facilities and achieve health, wellbeing and regeneration objectives. The scheme would be part funded by £10M from the Towns Fund and would require a further £30M of match funding. The lead organisations would be SBC and HCC, who owned the land, supported by consultants Sport Leisure Culture (SLC). The project was fully consistent with the Stevenage TIP.

Chris stated that that the Hub would be an exciting facility which combined swimming and leisure on one site, with the option for the inclusion of youth services. There was an opportunity to deliver a regional quality facility that met residents' needs now and in the future. The feasibility study, cost plan and operating model had been updated, in line with the work carried out to procure a new leisure operator contract.

Chris acknowledged that there was a significant funding requirement for the project, but commented that SBC was committed to the scheme, and that detailed funding planning was underway. There would be an extensive design process to make the building a reality, and the images shown to the Board were indicative, although it was recognised that the project would have a significant lead-in time.

In terms of engagement, Chris explained that this had taken place with over 1,200 people and had focussed on current activity levels and what leisure services they would wish to see in the town in the future. There had also been some soft market testing with potential Leisure Management contractors to gauge a response from the operational side.

Chris recommended that the Business Case be endorsed.

The Board debated the Business Case, and the following points were made:

- it was essential that Business Case stressed the work that had been carried out and would be continuing addressing health inequalities in Stevenage (such as the Stevenage Healthy Hub), which would be aided by modern, high quality and accessible sports and leisure provision.
- it was clarified that the project primarily related to the provision of indoor

facilities, as the extent of the site was limited. However, there would be an opportunity to link into nearby outdoor sites, such as the King George V Playing Fields.

- the SBC Leisure Management contract was in the process of being renewed and it was hoped that the operator of the new contract in 2023 would be able to know the level of indoor and outdoor leisure facilities that needed to be provided in Stevenage; and
- it was important to recognise that, should the scheme come to fruition, this was yet another site in Stevenage Town Centre that would be re-vitalised through the regeneration/Town Deal programme.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Stevenage Sports and Leisure Hub Project Business Case be endorsed and recommended to the Accountable Body (Stevenage Borough Council) for approval and noting that a detailed funding strategy would be developed for match funding, including the development of funding bids with external partners.

## **6 FINANCE UPDATE**

Chris Barnes (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) provided a brief update on the finances relating to the Town Deal projects which comprised the Stevenage Town Investment Plan.

Chris informed the Board that, as at 18 January 2022, there had been expenditure of £325,000 from the Stevenage Towns Fund Capital Budget in 2021/22. He also drew attention to a summary which provided a breakdown of Towns Fund costs relating to each of the nine schemes comprising the Stevenage Town Investment Plan.

In terms of next steps, Chris advised that:

- Defrayed expenditure versus forecast would be updated and circulated on a quarterly basis.
- Quarterly spend profiles would be created for each of the projects due to deliver expenditure in the first couple of years.
- A forecast would be finalised for total programme costs and apportioned across the projects – this would result in small adjustments to some projects’ “available capital”;
- The Team would focus on ensuring that actual spend by the end of March 2022 met profiled spend; and
- The overall profile would be reviewed once all business cases were completed and updated where necessary.

## **7 REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

Dave Wells (SBC Principal Regeneration Officer) gave a presentation providing a progress update on Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration.

As an overview, Dave advised that work on the regeneration sites had progressed at pace following the contractors’ winter shutdown, with some impact from the Covid pandemic. Planning permission had been granted for several key developments. There had been evidence of a strong market appetite for involvement in Stevenage projects from large contractors, helped by developments outside of the town centre.

The Regeneration Team had taken on additional resources as the programme had expanded.

Bus Interchange Project: work was progressing well on site, with the main structure complete. Interior aspects, such as the live arrival and departure boards, seating, CCTV and lighting, had all been installed. The contractor was hopeful that the scheme would be completed in February 2022, with the following months being used to work with operators to prepare the new interchange. The first phased area of the public realm connection from the Rail Station to the Town Centre was progressing significantly.

Queensway North Project: all residential units and been completed and handed over (50% had been let and enquiries remained high). There was a delay over practical completion of Block C, which was now expected in February 2022. Communications work was planned with some of the new tenants. The commercial works were nearing completion, with handover of the 3 remaining units expected in late January 2022.

SG1 Project Enabling: Plot A (Swingate) – archaeological survey works had been completed, with no significant findings. Enabling works related to the pedestrian route surrounding Swingate House were underway. The internal strip out of the building began in December 2021. Plot K (Southgate) – the demolition of the former Police Station was complete, and contractors were progressing with the demolition of the garages site. The Team was working on a hoarding design for when the site was cleared, and permanent hoarding was in place.

Railway Station North Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP): the improvement works to the Station Lift had been completed. Planning permission for the MSCP had been granted on 11 January 2022. The MSCP project Business Plan was due to be submitted to the SBC Executive for approval in early February 2022.

Autolus (Marshgate) project: the scheme for the Marshgate Biotech Centre was progressing well.

Although not part of the Town Centre Regeneration Programme, Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) informed the Board that the West of Stevenage project had recently received planning permission. The scheme was for 1,500 new homes, plus ancillary services, on land to the west of the A1(M) motorway. In response to a question from the Chair, Tom replied that the possibility of further new homes abutting the site over the Borough boundary in North Hertfordshire could be the case in the future but would be dependent on the outcome of the Planning Inspector's long-awaited decision on the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

## **8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### (1) Station Gateway

The Chair announced that following contact made with Network Rail by fellow Board member Richard Whitehead AECOM, on his behalf, he and Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) were to meet shortly with Network Rail representatives to commence an engagement process regarding improvements to the railway station area.

(2) Science Park visit

The Chair also advised that he would be accompanied by Stephen McPartland MP on a visit to the GSK/Catalyst/Catapult Science Park to promote skills development and to seek his support to the need for additional funding in this area in aid of the plans for further “Levelling Up” in Stevenage.

**9 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was noted that the next Board meeting would take place (via Zoom) at 10.00am on Thursday, 24 February 2022.

**CHAIR**